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SPEECHES

OF

Mr. PITT and Mr. FOX,

In the Houſe of Commons, on Monday, Nov. 23, on the Bill for preventing

Seditious Meetings and Aſſemblies.

Mr. FOX

Roſe, and obſerved, that it was ſaid the Bill had been miſrepreſented by thoſe who oppoſed it. This accuſation appeared to him rather of a ſingular nature—if he had miſrepreſented it, and by ſo doing impoſed upon the Peo[illegible]ould it be ſuppoſed that he would aſk for delay, which he [illegible]ays had thought an enemy to Miſrepreſentation, and which muſt neceſſarily lead to undeceive; and it was a ſingular circumſtance, that in thoſe very places in which there was the leaſt chance of ſucceſsful Miſrepreſentation, namely, in the Metropolis and its vicinity, becauſe the Bills were in every Man's hands, and Miniſters had too many Agents to ſuffer a falſe ſtatement to go uncontradicted; it was in thoſe very places that the Diſguſt was the ſtrongeſt againſt the Bills. He believed the majority of the People of this Country were againſt theſe Bills; and if he could believe it poſſible that they could ſhew any thing like approbation of ſuch Meaſures, he ſhould ſay indeed that they had loſt all the ſpirit and energy of their Anceſtors, and the true and genuine feelings of Engliſhmen. He hoped in this caſe he could enjoy the ſweets of retirement and repoſe, for he ſhould then have no longer any buſineſs in public life, he could no longer be a profitable Servant to ſuch a People.

He had a right to expect, that Bills which poſitively repealed the Bill of Rights, would not be enacted by Parliament, againſt the declared ſenſe of a Majority of the People. "If I were aſked (ſaid he) what I would now recommend, I would ſay, every peaceable remonſtrance, declaration, and petition, againſt ſuch Meaſures; but if I were aſked what I would recommend when theſe Bills were paſſed into Laws, I would ſay, *that the propriety of reſiſtance was a Queſtion, not of Morality, but of Prudence—It would be a caſe of extremity, and the only Queſtion to conſider, would be the chance of ſuch reſiſtance being effectual.*"

He was aware that theſe words were ſtrong, and liable to miſconſtruction; but a Public Man muſt not ſhrink in times of danger from ſtrong Expreſſions, becauſe they might be miſconſtrued. What he ſaid, he ſaid DELIBERATELY, and it was for the Authors and Abbettors of the Bills to conſider, whether they would hurry the Parliament to the paſſing of them, before it could be aſcertained whether the Senſe of the People was with them or not. As to any Amendments that could be made in the Committee, he wiſhed no Amendment might be made—he wiſhed the meaſure might be preſented to the Public in all its naked deformity—he thought that no Amendment could qualify this Attack upon the Conſtitution. The poiſon might be covered—it might be made more palatable, and it would be ſo much the worſe. If the Conſtitution was to be violated, he wiſhed that the People might ſee the Attack in all its glaring open Treaſon, and be rouſed to its defence.

Mr. PITT

Said, that there were ſome paſſages in the Speech of the Right Hon. Gentleman, which, conſiſtently with his duty as a Member of Parliament, with his feelings as a Man, with his Attachment to his SOVEREIGN, or his veneration for the Conſtitution, he could not hear without riſing inſtantly to expreſs his horror and indignation at them. It was not neceſſary for him to repeat the expreſſions and ſentiments to which he alluded—the Houſe had heard them with too much attention and ſurprize, to render any repetition neceſſary. The Right Hon. Gentleman had taken care not to be miſunderſtood—happily for the Country, this declaration of his Principles was too clear to admit of doubt.

That Gentleman, who had that night argued ſo ſtrenuouſly for the Privileges of the Houſe of Commons—that Gentleman, who had expreſſed ſuch regard for the ſafety of the Conſtitution, had openly avowed, that, if his arguments, his aſſertions, his *menaces* failed in procuring the rejection of theſe Bills, *he would counſel the People to take up Arms to reſiſt them, if they felt themſelves ſtrong enough.* With all the horror he felt at ſuch language, ſtill he was glad that the Right Hon. Gentleman had ſpoken out—the Houſe, the Country, would now judge of that Gentleman's *Principles* from his own language—they might now ſee the extent of his *veneration* for the Conſtitution, and of his reſpect for Parliament, when he could utter Sentiments tending to *a violation of his duty*, and ſetting at defiance *all legal puniſhment.* He rejoiced, however, that the Right Hon. Gentleman had made this avowal, becauſe he hoped IT WOULD WARN ALL TRUE FRIENDS OF THE CONSTITUTION TO RALLY FOR ITS DEFENCE.

He would not enter into a diſcuſſion of the abſtract right of Reſiſtance, or what degree of oppreſſion on the part of Government would ſet the People free from their Allegiance; but he would call to their recollection, that the Principles of theſe Bills, upon which the Right Hon Gentleman had ventured ſuch language, had met with the approbation of a large Majority of that Houſe, and he truſted that Majority had not forgot what was due to themſelves and to the Country. He hoped they would ſhew that Right Hon. Gentleman, that they had not loſt that ſpirit of their Anceſtors which had been ſo frequently referred to; and that if, by unjuſtifiable and treaſonable reſiſtance to the Acts of the Legiſlature, they ſhould be driven to the hard neceſſity of ſupporting the Law, and defending the Conſtitution by force, they would act with that irreſiſtible energy which muſt accompany ſuch a Cauſe---but he truſted that the regular power and peaceable operation of the Law would be ſufficient to defeat and *to puniſh* TREASON, *wherever it might be found.* But if, unfortunately, an Appeal ſhould ultimately be made to Force, he was perſuaded that all true Friends to the Conſtitution, would be prepared for the conteſt, and ready to fight under the Banners of the Law-- that they would ſhew as much vigour IN A GOOD CAUSE, as *deſperate Men* could do *in a bad one*; and would hazard, if neceſſary, their Lives, their Fortunes, and every thing they held dear, to reſcue themſelves from that Anarchy and Confuſion to which the practices which have long been purſued, and the Principles now openly avowed, evidently and neceſſarily tended.